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Selected Poems

by

J. E. Flecker

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Introductory Note

James Elroy Flecker died at Davos on January 2, 1915, at the age of thirty. His *Collected Poems* were published in the autumn of 1916, and readers may be referred to the preface of that volume for an account of his life and genius. His permanent place among the English poets is now assured. The present selection is, one hopes, sufficiently large and varied to illustrate both what he did and what, given a longer life, he might have done. Some of his longer poems—including his fine translation from Virgil—have had to be omitted, and no examples are given of those juvenile works which are necessarily of great interest to anyone who wishes to trace the development of the poet's thought and technique. But every period of his maturity is represented.

J. C. S.

Contents

To a Poet a Thousand Years Hence, 1
The Ballad of Camden Town, 3
The Piper, 5
Narcissus, 6
Tenebris Interlucentem, 8
God Save the King, 9
The Masque of the Magi, 11
The Town without a Market, 14
Dulce Lumen, 17
The Queen's Song, 19
Invitation, 21
War Song of the Saracens, 23
Lord Arnaldos, 25
The Welsh Sea, 27
No Coward's Song, 28
Pillage, 29
The Ballad of Iskander, 31
Epithalamion, 38
Don Juan Declaims, 40
The Dying Patriot, 43
The Hammam Name, 45
In Phaeacia, 48
Saadabad, 50

Yasmin, 53
Oak and Olive, 55
Areiya, 58
The Golden Journey to Samarkand, 59
Gates of Damascus, 65
Hyali, 72
Santorin, 75
A Ship, an Isle, a Sickle Moon, 77
In Hospital, 78
Brumana, 80
The Old Ships, 83
The Blue Noon, 85
Stillness, 86
Philomel, 87
Fountains, 89
Ode to the Glory of Greece, 90
November Eves, 95
The Burial in England, 96
The True Paradise, 100
The Old Warship Ablaze, 102

To a Poet a Thousand Years Hence

I who am dead a thousand years,
  And wrote this sweet archaic song,
Send you my words for messengers
  The way I shall not pass along.

I care not if you bridge the seas,
  Or ride secure the cruel sky,
Or build consummate palaces
  Of metal or of masonry.

But have you wine and music still,
  And statues and a bright-eyed love,
And foolish thoughts of good and ill,
  And prayers to them who sit above?

How shall we conquer? Like a wind
  That falls at eve our fancies blow,
And old Mæonides the blind
  Said it three thousand years ago.

O friend unseen, unborn, unknown,
Student of our sweet English tongue,
Read out my words at night, alone :
I was a poet, I was young.

Since I can never see your face,
And never shake you by the hand,
I send my soul through time and space
To greet you. You will understand.

The Ballad of Camden Town

I walked with Maisie long years back
The streets of Camden Town,
I splendid in my suit of black,
And she divine in brown.

Hers was a proud and noble face,
A secret heart, and eyes
Like water in a lonely place
Beneath unclouded skies.

A bed, a chest, a faded mat,
And broken chairs a few,
Were all we had to grace our flat
In Hazel Avenue.

But I could walk to Hampstead Heath,
And crown her head with daisies,
And watch the streaming world beneath,
And men with other Maisies.

When I was ill and she was pale
And empty stood our store,
She left the latchkey on its nail,
And saw me nevermore.

Perhaps she cast herself away
Lest both of us should drown:
Perhaps she feared to die, as they
Who die in Camden Town.

What came of her? The bitter nights
Destroy the rose and lily,
And souls are lost among the lights
Of painted Piccadilly.

What came of her? The river flows
So deep and wide and stilly,
And waits to catch the fallen rose
And clasp the broken lily.

I dream she dwells in London still
And breathes the evening air,
And often walk to Primrose Hill,
And hope to meet her there.

Once more together we will live,
For I will find her yet:
I have so little to forgive;
So much, I can't forget.

The Piper

A lad went piping through the Earth,
  Gladly, madly, merrily,
With a tune for death and a tune for birth,
  And a tune for lover's revelry.

He kissed the girls that sat alone
  With none to whisper, none to woo;
Fired at his touch their faces shone,
  And beauty drenched them as the dew.

Old men who heard him danced again,
  And shuffled round with catching breath,
And those that lay on beds of pain
  Went dancing through the gates of death.

If only he could make us thrill
  Once more with mirth and melody!
I listened, but the street was still,
  And no one played for you and me.

Narcissus

O pool in which we dallied
And splashed the prostrate Noon!
O Water-boy, more pallid
Than any watery moon!
O Lilies round him turning!
O broken Lilies, strewn!
O silver Lutes of Morning!
O Red of the Drums of Noon!

O dusky-plumaged sorrow!
O ebon Swans of Care—
I sought thee on the Morrow,
And never found thee there!
I breathed the vapour-blended
Cloud of a dim despair.
White lily, is it ended?
Gold lily—oh, golden hair!

The pool that was thy dwelling
I hardly knew again,
So black it was, and swelling
With bitter wind and rain.

'Mid the bowed leaves I lingered,
Lashed by the blast of Pain,
Till evening, storm-rose-fingered,
Beckoned to night again.

There burst a flood of Quiet
Over the unstellèd skies;
Full moon flashed out a-riot:
Near her I dreamt thine eyes
Afloat with night, still trembling
With captured mysteries:
But sulphured wracks, assembling,
Redarkened the bright skies.

Ah, thou at least art lying
Safe at the white nymph's feet,
Listless, while I, slow-dying,
Twist my gaunt limbs for heat!
Yet I'll to Earth, my Mother:
So, boy, I'll still entreat
Forgive me—for none other
Like Earth is honey-sweet!

Tenebris Interlucentem

A linnet who had lost her way
Sang on a blackened bough in Hell,
Till all the ghosts remembered well
The trees, the wind, the golden day.

At last they knew that they had died
When they heard music in that land,
And some one there stole forth a hand
To draw a brother to his side.

God Save the King

God save our gracious King,
Nation and State and King,
God save the King!
Grant him the Peace divine,
But if his Wars be Thine
Flash on our fighting line
Victory's Wing!

Thou in his suppliant hands
Hast placed such Mighty Lands:
Save thou our King!
As once from golden Skies
Rebels with flaming eyes,
So the King's Enemies
Doom Thou and fling!

Mountains that break the night
Holds He by eagle right
Stretching far Wing!
Dawn lands for Youth to reap,
Dim lands where Empires sleep,
His! And the Lion Deep
Roars for the King.

But most these few dear miles
Of sweetly-meadowed Isles,—
England all Spring;
Scotland that by the marge
Where the blank North doth charge
Hears Thy Voice loud and large,
Save, and their King!

Grace on the golden Dales
Of Thine old Christian Wales
Shower till they sing,
Till Erin's Island lawn
Echoes the dulcet-drawn
Song with a cry of Dawn—
God save the King!

The Masque of the Magi

Three Kings have come to Bethlehem
With a trailing star in front of them.

MARY

What would you in this little place,
You three bright kings?

KINGS

Mother, we tracked the trailing star
Which brought us here from lands afar,
And we would look on his dear face
Round whom the Seraphs fold their wings.

MARY

But who are you, bright kings?

Caspar

Caspar am I: the rocky North
From storm and silence drave me forth
  Down to the blue and tideless sea.
I do not fear the tinkling sword,
For I am a great battle-lord,
  And love the horns of chivalry.
And I have brought thee splendid gold,
The strong man's joy, refined and cold
  All hail, thou Prince of Galilee!

Balthazar

I am Balthazar, Lord of Ind,
Where blows a soft and scented wind
  From Taprobane towards Cathay.
My children, who are tall and wise,
Stand by a tree with shutten eyes
  And seem to meditate or pray.
And these red drops of frankincense
Betoken man's intelligence.
  Hail, Lord of Wisdom, Prince of Day!

Melchior

I am the dark man, Melchior,
And I shall live but little more
  Since I am old and feebly move.

My kingdom is a burnt-up land
Half buried by the drifting sand,
  So hot Apollo shines above.
What could I bring but simple myrrh
White blossom of the cordial fire?
  Hail, Prince of Souls, and Lord of Love!

Chorus of Angels

O Prince of souls and Lord of Love,
O'er thee the purple-breasted dove
Shall watch with open silver wings,
  Thou King of Kings.
Suaviole o flos Virginum,
Apparuit Rex Gentium.

"Who art thou, little King of Kings?"
His wondering mother sings.

The Town without a Market

There lies afar behind a western hill
The Town without a Market, white and still;
For six feet long and not a third as high
Are those small habitations. There stood I,
Waiting to hear the citizens beneath
Murmur and sigh and speak through tongueless teeth.
When all the world lay burning in the sun
I heard their voices speak to me. Said one:
" Bright lights I loved and colours, I who find
That death is darkness, and has struck me blind."
Another cried: " I used to sing and play,
But here the world is silent, day by day."
And one: " On earth I could not see or hear,
But with my fingers touched what I was near,
And knew things round and soft, and brass from gold,
And dipped my hand in water, to feel cold,
And thought the grave would cure me, and was glad
When the time came to lose what joy I had."
Soon all the voices of a hundred dead
Shouted in wrath together. Some one said,
" I care not, but the girl was sweet to kiss
At evening in the meadows." " Hard it is,"

Another cried, " to hear no hunting horn.
Ah me ! the horse, the hounds, and the great grey morn
When I rode out a-hunting." And one sighed,
" I did not see my son before I died."
A boy said, " I was strong and swift to run :
Now they have tied my feet : what have I done ? "
A man, " But it was good to arm and fight
And storm their cities in the dead of night."
An old man said, " I read my books all day,
But death has taken all my books away."
And one, " The popes and prophets did not well
To cheat poor dead men with false hopes of hell.
Better the whips of fire that hiss and rend
Than painless void proceeding to no end."
I smiled to hear them restless, I who sought
Peace. For I had not loved, I had not fought,
And books are vanities, and manly strength
A gathered flower. God grant us peace at length !
I heard no more, and turned to leave their town
Before the chill came, and the sun went down.
Then rose a whisper, and I seemed to know
A timorous man, buried long years ago.
" On Earth I used to shape the Thing that seems.
Master of all men, give me back my dreams.
Give me that world that never failed me then,
The hills I made and peopled with tall men,
The palace that I built and called my home,
My cities which could break the pride of Rome,
The three queens hidden in the sacred tree,
And those white cloudy folk who sang to me.

O death, why hast thou covered me so deep?
I was thy sister's child, the friend of Sleep."

Then said my heart, Death takes and cannot give
Dark with no dream is hateful: let me live!

Dulce Lumen, Triste Numen, Suave Lumen Luminum

The town whose quiet veins are dark green sea,
The town whose flowers and forests are bright stone :
There it was the God came to you and me
In the signless depth of summer. All alone
We lay, and half in dream
Gazed at the thin salt stream,
And heard the ripples talking lazily.

No verdurous growth, no sudden sharp decline
Of buds or leaves is there : the marble towers
Come rain, come cold, come snow or gay sunshine
Blossom eternally with graven flowers ;
Yet there the mild God came,
In silence, shod with flame,
Girdled with mystery and crowned with vine.

We lay in the sun and listened, and we heard
Soft-treading feet and whispers in the air,
And thunder far away, like a god's word
Of dire import, and saw the noonday flare

And tall white palaces
Sway all with dizziness ;
The bells pealed faintly, and the water stirred

And Life stood still a moment, mists came swinging
Blindly before us ; suddenly we passed
The boundaries of joy : our hearts were ringing
True to the trembling world : we stood at last
Beyond the golden gate,
Masters of Time and Fate,
And knew the tune that Sun and Stars were singing.

For like two travellers on a hill, who stay
Viewing the smoke that dims the busy plains,
So, far away (sweet words are " far away " !)
We saw our life : and all its crooked lanes,
Dim cities and dark walls
Fell as a world that falls
And left us radiant in the Wind of Day.

An end, an end ! Again the leaden noon
Glowed, and hot Fever opened her red eyes,
And Misery came creeping out, and soon
We felt once more the sorrow of the Wise.
Come, friend ! We travel on
(That one brief vision gone)
Bravely, like men who see beyond the skies.

The Queen's Song

Had I the power
To Midas given of old
To touch a flower
And leave the petals gold
I then might touch thy face,
Delightful boy,
And leave a metal grace,
A graven joy.

Thus would I slay,—
Ah, desperate device!
The vital day
That trembles in thine eyes,
And let the red lips close
Which sang so well,
And drive away the rose
To leave a shell.

Then I myself,
Rising austere and dumb
On the high shelf
Of my half-lighted room,

Would place the shining bust
    And wait alone,
Until I was but dust,
    Buried unknown.

Thus in my love
    For nations yet unborn,
I would remove
    From our two lives the morn,
And muse on loveliness
    In mine arm-chair,
Content should Time confess
    How sweet you were.

Invitation

To a young but learned friend to abandon archæology for the moment, and play once more with his neglected muse.

In those good days when we were young and wise,
You spake to music, you with the thoughtful eyes,
And God looked down from heaven, pleased to hear
A young man's song arise so firm and clear.
Has Fancy died? The Morning Star gone cold?
Why are you silent? Have we grown so old?
Who sings upon Parnassus? He is dead,
The God to whom be prayers, not praises, said,
The sea-born, the Ionian. There is one—
But he dreams deeper than the oaks of Clun.
(May summer keep his maids and meadows glad:
They hear no more the pipe of the Shropshire Lad!)
And our Tyrtæus? Strange that such a name
Already fades upon the mist of fame
With the smoke of Eastern armies. But the third
Still knows the dreadful meaning of a word.
His gown is black and crimson: mystery
Veils all his speech, so wonderful is he.

These three remain, and voiceless you, and I.
—Come, the sweet radiance of our Spring is nigh.
Must I alone keep playing? Will not you,
Lord of the Measures, string your lyre anew?
Lover of Greece, is this the richest store
You bring us,—withered leaves and dusty lore,
And broken vases widowed of their wine,
To brand you pedant while you stand divine?
Decorous words beseem the learned lip,
But Poets have the nicer scholarship.
In English glades they watch the Cyprian glow
And all the Mænad melodies they know.
They hear strange voices in a London street,
And track the silver gleam of rushing feet;
And these are things that come not to the view
Of slippered dons who read a codex through.
O honeyed Poet, will you praise no more
The moonlit garden and the midnight shore?
Brother, have you forgotten how to sing
The story of that weak and cautious king
Who reigned two hundred years in Trebizond?
You who would ever strive to pierce beyond
Love's ecstasy, Life's vision, is it well
We should not know the tales you have to tell?

War Song of the Saracens

We are they who come faster than fate : we are they who
ride early or late :
We storm at your ivory gate : Pale Kings of the Sunset,
beware !
Not on silk nor in samet we lie, not in curtained solemnity
die
Among women who chatter and cry, and children who
mumble a prayer.
But we sleep by the ropes of the camp, and we rise with a
shout, and we tramp
With the sun or the moon for a lamp, and the spray of the
wind in our hair.

From the lands, where the elephants are, to the forts of
Merou and Balghar,
Our steel we have brought and our star to shine on the
ruins of Rum.
We have marched from the Indus to Spain, and by God
we will go there again ;
We have stood on the shore of the plain where the Waters
of Destiny boom.

A mart of destruction we made at Jalula where men were
afraid,
For death was a difficult trade, and the sword was a broker
of doom ;

And the Spear was a Desert Physician who cured not a
few of ambition,
And drave not a few to perdition with medicine bitter
and strong :
And the shield was a grief to the fool and as bright as a
desolate pool,
And as straight as the rock of Stamboul when their
cavalry thundered along :
For the coward was drowned with the brave when our
battle sheered up like a wave,
And the dead to the desert we gave, and the glory to
God in our song.

Lord Arnaldos

¿Quien hubiese tal ventura?

The strangest of adventures,
That happen by the sea,
Befell to Lord Arnaldos
On the Evening of St. John;
For he was out a-hunting—
A huntsman bold was he!—
When he beheld a little ship
And close to land was she.
Her cords were all of silver,
Her sails of cramasy;
And he who sailed the little ship
Was singing at the helm:
The waves stood still to hear him,
The wind was soft and low;
The fish who dwell in darkness
Ascended through the sea,
And all the birds in heaven
Flew down to his mast-tree.
Then spake the Lord Arnaldos,
(Well shall you hear his words!)

"Tell me for God's sake, sailor,
What song may that song be?"
The sailor spake in answer,
And answer thus made he:
"I only tell my song to those
Who sail away with me."

The Welsh Sea

Far out across Carnarvon bay,
  Beneath the evening waves,
The ancient dead begin their day
  And stream among the graves.

Listen, for they of ghostly speech,
  Who died when Christ was born,
May dance upon the yellow beach
  That once was yellow corn.

And you may learn of Dyfed's reign,
  And dream Nemedian tales
Of Kings who sailed in ships from Spain
  And lent their swords to Wales.

Listen, for like a slow, green snake
  The Ocean twists and stirs,
And whispers how the dead men wake
  And call across the years.

No Coward's Song

I am afraid to think about my death,
When it shall be, and whether in great pain
I shall rise up and fight the air for breath
Or calmly wait the bursting of my brain.

I am no coward who could seek in fear
A folk-lore solace or sweet Indian tales :
I know dead men are deaf and cannot hear
The singing of a thousand nightingales.

I know dead men are blind and cannot see
The friend that shuts in horror their big eyes
And they are witless—O, I'd rather be
A living mouse than dead as a man dies.

Pillage

They will trample our gardens to mire, they will bury
our city in fire ;
Our women await their desire, our children the clang of
the chain.
Our grave-eyed judges and lords they will bind by the
neck with cords,
And harry with whips and swords till they perish of
shame or pain,
And the great lapis lazuli dome where the gods of our
race had a home
Will break like a wave from the foam, and shred into
fiery rain.

No more on the long summer days shall we walk in the
meadow-sweet ways
With the teachers of music and phrase, and the masters
of dance and design.
No more when the trumpeter calls shall we feast in the
white-light halls ;
For stayed are the soft footfalls of the moon-browed
bearers of wine,

And lost are the statues of Kings and of Gods with great glorious wings,
And an empire of beautiful things, and the lips of the love who was mine.

We have vanished, but not into night, though our manhood we sold to delight,
Neglecting the chances of fight, unfit for the spear and the bow.
We are dead, but our living was great: we are dumb, but a song of our State
Will roam in the desert and wait, with its burden of long, long ago,
Till a scholar from sea-bright lands unearth from the years and the sands
Some image with beautiful hands, and know what we want him to know.

The Ballad of Iskander

Aflatun and Aristu and King Iskander
Are Plato, Aristotle, Alexander

Sultan Iskander sat him down
On his golden throne, in his golden crown,
And shouted, " Wine and flute-girls three,
And the Captain, ho ! of my ships at sea."

He drank his bowl of wine; he kept
The flute-girls dancing till they wept,
Praised and kissed their painted lips,
And turned to the Captain of All his Ships

And cried, " O Lord of my Ships that go
From the Persian Gulf to the Pits of Snow,
Inquire for men unknown to man ! "
Said Sultan Iskander of Yoonistan.

" Daroosh is dead, and I am King
Of Everywhere and Everything :
Yet leagues and leagues away for sure
The lion-hearted dream of war.

" Admiral, I command you sail!
Take you a ship of silver mail,
And fifty sailors, young and bold,
And stack provision deep in the hold,

" And seek out twenty men that know
All babel tongues which flaunt and flow;
And stay! Impress those learned two,
Old Aflatun, and Aristu.

" And set your prow South-western ways
A thousand bright and dimpling days,
And find me lion-hearted Lords
With breasts to feed Our rusting swords."

The Captain of the Ships bowed low.
" Sir," he replied, " I will do so."
And down he rode to the harbour mouth,
To choose a boat to carry him South.

And he launched a ship of silver mail,
With fifty lads to hoist the sail,
And twenty wise—all tongues they knew,
And Aflatun, and Aristu.

There had not dawned the second day
But the glittering galleon sailed away,
And through the night like one great bell
The marshalled armies sang farewell.

In twenty days the silver ship
Had passed the Isle of Serendip,
And made the flat Araunian coasts
Inhabited, at noon, by Ghosts.

In thirty days the ship was far
Beyond the land of Calcobar,
Where men drink Dead Men's Blood for wine,
And dye their beards alizarine.

But on the hundredth day there came
Storm with his windy wings aflame,
And drave them out to that Lone Sea
Whose shores are near Eternity.

. . .

For seven years and seven years
Sailed those forgotten mariners,
Nor could they spy on either hand
The faintest level of good red land.

Bird or fish they saw not one ;
There swam no ship beside their own
And day-night long the lilied Deep
Lay round them, with its flowers asleep.

The beams began to warp and crack,
The silver plates turned filthy black,
And drooping down on the carven rails
Hung those once lovely silken sails.

And all the great ship's crew who were
Such noble lads to do and dare
Grew old and tired of the changeless sky
And laid them down on the deck to die.

And they who spake all tongues there be
Made antics with solemnity,
Or closely huddled each to each
Talked ribald in a foreign speech.

And Aflatun and Aristu
Let their Beards grow, and their Beards grew
Round and about the mainmast tree
Where they stood still, and watched the sea.

And day by day their Captain grey
Knelt on the rotting poop to pray:
And yet despite ten thousand prayers
They saw no ship that was not theirs.

. . .

When thrice the seven years had passed
They saw a ship, a ship at last!
Untarnished glowed its silver mail,
Windless bellied its silken sail.

With a shout the grizzled sailors rose
Cursing the years of sick repose,
And they who spake in tongues unknown
Gladly reverted to their own.

The Captain leapt and left his prayers
And hastened down the dust-dark stairs,
And taking to hand a brazen Whip
He woke to life the long dead ship.

But Aflatun and Aristu,
Who had no work that they could do,
Gazed at the stranger Ship and Sea
With their beards around the mainmast tree.

Nearer and nearer the new boat came,
Till the hands cried out on the old ship's shame—
" Silken sail to a silver boat,
We too shone when we first set float ! "

Swifter and swifter the bright boat sped,
But the hands spake thin like men long dead—
" *How striking like that boat were we*
In the days, sweet days, when we put to sea."

The ship all black and the ship all white
Met like the meeting of day and night,
Met, and there lay serene dark green
A twilight yard of the sea between.

And the twenty masters of foreign speech
Of every tongue they knew tried each ;
Smiling, the silver Captain heard,
But shook his head and said no word.

Then Aflatun and Aristu
Addressed the silver Lord anew,
Speaking their language of Yoonistan
Like countrymen to a countryman.

And " Whence," they cried, " O Sons of Pride,
Sail you the dark eternal tide ?
Lie your halls to the South or North,
And who is the King that sent you forth ? "

" We live," replied that Lord with a smile,
" A mile beyond the millionth mile.
We know not South and we know not North,
And *SULTAN ISKANDER* sent us forth."

Said Aristu to Aflatun—
" Surely our King, despondent soon,
Has sent this second ship to find
Unconquered tracts of humankind."

But Aflatun turned round on him
Laughing a bitter laugh and grim.
" Alas," he said, " O Aristu,
A white weak thin old fool are you.

" And does yon silver Ship appear
As she had journeyed twenty year ?
And has that silver Captain's face
A mortal or Immortal grace ?

" Theirs is the land (as well I know)
Where live the Shapes of Things Below :
Theirs is the country where they keep
The Images men see in sleep.

" Theirs is the Land beyond the Door,
And theirs the old ideal shore.
They steer our ship : behold our crew
Ideal, and our Captain too.

" And lo ! beside that mainmast tree
Two tall and shining forms I see,
And they are what we ought to be,
Yet we are they, and they are we."

He spake, and some young Zephyr stirred,
The two ships touched : no sound was heard ;
The Black Ship crumbled into air ;
Only the Phantom Ship was there.

And a great cry rang round the sky
Of glorious singers sweeping by,
And calm and fair on waves that shone
The Silver Ship sailed on and on.

Epithalamion

Smile then, children, hand in hand
Bright and white as the summer snow,
Or that young King of the Grecian land,
Who smiled on Thetis, long ago,—
So long ago when, heart aflame,
The grave and gentle Peleus came
To the shore where the halcyon flies
To wed the maiden of his devotion,
The dancing lady with sky-blue eyes,
Thetis, the darling of Paradise,
The daughter of old Ocean.
Seas before her rise and break,
Dolphins tumble in her wake
Along the sapphire courses :
With Tritons ablow on their pearly shells
With a plash of waves and a clash of bells
From the glimmering house where her Father dwells
She drives his white-tail horses !
And the boys of heaven gowned and crowned,
Have Aphrodite to lead them round,
Aphrodite with hair unbound

Her silver breasts adorning,
Her long, her soft, her streaming hair,
Falls on a silver breast laid bare
By the stir and swing of the sealit air
And the movement of the morning

Don Juan Declaims

I am Don Juan, curst from age to age
By priestly tract and sentimental stage:
Branded a villain or believed a fool,
Battered by hatred, seared by ridicule,
Noble on earth, all but a king in Hell,
I am Don Juan with a tale to tell.
  Hot leapt the dawn from deep Plutonian fires
And ran like blood among the twinkling spires.
The market quickened: carts came rattling down:
Good human music roared about the town,
"And come," they cried, "and buy the best of Spain's
Great fireskinned fruits with cold and streaming veins!"
Others, "The man who'd make a lordly dish,
Would buy my speckled or my silver fish."
And some, "I stitch you raiment to the rule!"
And some, "I sell you attar of Stamboul!"
"And I have lapis for your love to wear,
Pearls for her neck and amber for her hair."
Death has its gleam. They swing before me still,
The shapes and sounds and colours of Seville!
  For there I learnt to love the plot, the fight,
The masker's cloak, the ladder set for flight,

The stern pursuit, the rapier's glint of death,
The scent of starlit roses, beauty's breath,
The music and the passion and the prize,
Aragon lips and Andalusían eyes.
This day a democrat I scoured the town ;
Courting, the next, I brought a princess down :
Now in some lady's panelled chamber hid
Achieved what love approves and laws forbid,
Now walked and whistled round the sleepy farms
And clasped a Dulcinea in my arms.
I was the true, the grand idealist :
My light could pierce the pretty golden mist
That hides from common souls the starrier climes :
I loved as small men do ten-thousand times ;
Rose to the blue triumphant, curved my bow,
Set high the mark and brought an angel low,
And laced with that brave body and shining soul
Learnt how to live, then learnt to love the whole.
And I first broke that jungle dark and dense,
Which hides the silver house of Commonsense,
And dissipated that disastrous lie
Which makes a god of stuffless Unity,
And drave the dark behind me, and revealed
A Pagan sunrise on a Christian field.
My legend tells how once, by passion moved,
I slew the father of a girl I loved,
Then summoned—like an old and hardened sinner—
The brand-new statue of the dead to dinner.
My ribald guests, with Spanish wine aflame,
Were most delighted when the statue came,

Bowed to the party, made a little speech,
And bore me off beyond their human reach.
Well, priests must flourish and the truth must pale:
A very pious, entertaining tale.
But this believe. I struck a ringing blow
At sour Authority's ancestral show,
And stirred the sawdust understuffing all
The sceptred or the surpliced ritual.
I willed my happiness, kept bright and brave
My thoughts and deeds this side the accursed grave,
Life was a ten-course banquet after all,
And neatly rounded by my funeral.
"Pale guest, why strip the roses from your brow?
We hope to feast till morning." "Who knocks now?"
"Twelve of the clock, Don Juan." In came he,
That shining, tall and cold Authority,
Whose marble lips smile down on lips that pray,
And took my hand, and I was led away.

The Dying Patriot

Day breaks on England down the Kentish hills,
Singing in the silence of the meadow-footing rills,
Day of my dreams, O day!
I saw them march from Dover, long ago,
With a silver cross before them, singing low,
Monks of Rome from their home where the blue seas break in foam,
Augustine with his feet of snow.

Noon strikes on England, noon on Oxford town,
—Beauty she was statue cold—there's blood upon her gown:
Noon of my dreams, O noon!
Proud and godly kings had built her, long ago,
With her towers and tombs and statues all arow,
With her fair and floral air and the love that lingers there,
And the streets where the great men go.

Evening on the olden, the golden sea of Wales,
When the first star shivers and the last wave pales·
O evening dreams!

There's a house that Britons walked in, long ago,
Where now the springs of ocean fall and flow,
And the dead robed in red and sea-lilies overhead
Sway when the long winds blow.

Sleep not, my country : though night is here, afar
Your children of the morning are clamorous for war :
Fire in the night, O dreams !
Though she send you as she sent you, long ago,
South to desert, east to ocean, west to snow,
West of these out to seas colder than the Hebrides I must go
Where the fleet of stars is anchored and the young Star-captains glow.

The Hammam Name

(*From a poem by a Turkish lady*)

Winsome Torment rose from slumber, rubbed his eyes,
and went his way
Down the street towards the Hammam. Goodness
gracious! people say,
What a handsome countenance! The sun has risen twice
to-day!
And as for the Undressing Room it quivered in dismay.
With the glory of his presence see the window panes
perspire,
And the water in the basin boils and bubbles with desire.

Now his lovely cap is treated like a lover: off it goes!
Next his belt the boy unbuckles; down it falls, and at his
toes
All the growing heap of garments buds and blossoms like
a rose.
Last of all his shirt came flying. Ah, I tremble to disclose
How the shell came off the almond, how the lily showed
its face,
How I saw a silver mirror taken flashing from its case.

He was gazed upon so hotly that his body grew too hot,
So the bathman seized the adorers and expelled them on the spot;
Then the desperate shampooer his propriety forgot,
Stumbled when he brought the pattens, fumbled when he tied a knot,
And remarked when musky towels had obscured his idol's hips,
See Love's Plenilune, Mashallah, in a partial eclipse!

Desperate the loofah wriggled: soap was melted instantly:
All the bubble hearts were broken. Yes, for them as well as me,
Bitterness was born of beauty; as for the shampooer, he
Fainted, till a jug of water set the Captive Reason free.
Happy bath! The baths of heaven cannot wash their spotted moon:
You are doing well with this one. Not a spot upon him soon!

Now he leaves the luckless bath for fear of setting it alight;
Seizes on a yellow towel growing yellower in fright,
Polishes the pearly surface till it burns disastrous bright,
And a bathroom window shatters in amazement at the sight.
Like the fancies of a dreamer frail and soft his garments shine
As he robes a mirror body shapely as a poet's line.

Now upon his cup of coffee see the lips of Beauty bent :
And they perfume him with incense and they sprinkle him
with scent,
Call him Bey and call him Pasha, and receive with deep
content
The gratuities he gives them, smiling and indifferent.
Out he goes : the mirror strains to kiss her darling ; out
he goes !
Since the flame is out, the water can but freeze.
The water froze.

In Phaeacia

Had I that haze of streaming blue,
That sea below, the summer faced,
I'd work and weave a dress for you
And kneel to clasp it round your waist,
And broider with those burning bright
Threads of the Sun across the sea,
And bind it with the silver light
That wavers in the olive tree.

Had I the gold that like a river
Pours through our garden, eve by eve,
Our garden that goes on for ever
Out of the world, as we believe;
Had I that glory on the vine
That splendour soft on tower and town,
I'd forge a crown of that sunshine,
And break before your feet the crown.

Through the great pinewood I have been
An hour before the lustre dies,
Nor have such forest-colours seen
As those that glimmer in your eyes.

Ah, misty woodland, down whose deep
And twilight paths I love to stroll
To meadows quieter than sleep
And pools more secret than the soul!

Could I but steal that awful throne
Ablaze with dreams and songs and stars
Where sits Night, a man of stone,
On the frozen mountain spars,
I'd cast him down, for he is old,
And set my Lady there to rule,
Gowned with silver, crowned with gold,
And in her eyes the forest pool.

Saadabad

I

Let us deal kindly with a heart of old by sorrow torn :
Come with Nedim to Saadabad, my love, this silver morn :
I hear the boatmen singing from our caïque on the Horn,
Waving cypress, waving cypress, let us go to Saadabad !

We shall watch the Sultan's fountains ripple, rumble, splash and rise
Over terraces of marble, under the blue balconies,
Leaping through the plaster dragon's hollow mouth and empty eyes :
Waving cypress, waving cypress, let us go to Saadabad.

Lie a little to your mother : tell her you must out to pray,
And we'll slink along the alleys, thieves of all a summer day,
Down to the worn old watersteps, and then, my love, away :
O my cypress, waving cypress, let us go to Saadabad.

You and I, and with us only some poor lover in a dream :
I and you—perhaps one minstrel who will sing beside the stream.
Ah Nedim will be the minstrel, and the lover be Nedim,
Waving cypress, waving cypress, when we go to Saadabad !

II

Down the Horn Constantinople fades and flashes in the blue,
Rose of cities dropping with the heavy summer's burning dew,
Fading now as falls the Orient evening round the sky and you,
Fading into red and silver as we row to Saadabad.

Banish then, O Grecian eyes, the passion of the waiting West !
Shall God's holy monks not enter on a day God knoweth best
To crown the Roman king again, and hang a cross upon his breast ?
Daughter of the Golden Islands, come away to Saadabad.

And a thousand swinging steeples shall begin as they began
When Heraclius rode home from the wrack of Ispahan,
Naked captives pulled behind him, double eagles in the van—
But is that a tale for lovers on the way to Saadabad ?

Rather now shall you remember how of old two such as
we,
You like her the laughing mistress of a poet, him or me,
Came to find the flowery lawns that give the soul tran-
quillity :
Let the boatmen row no longer—for we land at Saadabad.

See you not that moon-dim caïque with the lovers at the
prow,
Straining eyes and aching lips, and touching hands as we
do now,
See you not the turbaned shadows passing, whence ? and
moving, how ?
Are the ghosts of all the Moslems floating down to
Saadabad ?

. . . . .

Broken fountains, phantom waters, nevermore to glide
and gleam
From the dragon-mouth in plaster sung of old by old
Nedim,
Beautiful and broken fountains, keep you still your
Sultan's dream,
Or remember how his poet took a girl to Saadabad ?

Yasmin

A GHAZEL

How splendid in the morning glows the lily: with what grace he throws
His supplication to the rose: do roses nod the head, Yasmin?

But when the silver dove descends I find the little flower of friends
Whose very name that sweetly ends I say when I have said Yasmin.

The morning light is clear and cold: I dare not in that light behold
A whiter light, a deeper gold, a glory too far shed, Yasmin.

But when the deep red eye of day is level with the lone highway,
And some to Meccah turn to pray, and I towards thy bed, Yasmin;

Or when the wind beneath the moon is drifting like a soul aswoon,
And harping planets talk love's tune with milky wings outspread, Yasmin,

Shower down thy love, O burning bright! For one night or the other night
Will come the Gardener in white, and gathered flowers are dead, Yasmin.

Oak and Olive

i

Though I was born a Londoner,
  And bred in Gloucestershire,
I walked in Hellas years ago
  With friends in white attire :
And I remember how my soul
  Drank wine as pure as fire.

And when I stand by Charing Cross
  I can forget to hear
The crash of all those smoking wheels,
  When those cold flutes and clear
Pipe with such fury down the street,
  My hands grow moist with fear.

And there's a hall in Bloomsbury
  No more I dare to tread,
For all the stone men shout at me
  And swear they are not dead ;
And once I touched a broken girl
  And knew that marble bled.

ii

But when I walk in Athens town
That swims in dust and sun
Perverse, I think of London then
Where massive work is done,
And with what sweep at Westminster
The rayless waters run.

I ponder how from Attic seed
There grew an English tree,
How Byron like his heroes fell,
Fighting a country free,
And Swinburne took from Shelley's lips
The kiss of Poetry.

And while our poets chanted Pan
Back to his pipes and power,
Great Verrall, bending at his desk,
And searching hour on hour
Found out old gardens, where the wise
May pluck a Spartan flower.

iii

When I go down the Gloucester lanes
My friends are deaf and blind :
Fast as they turn their foolish eyes
The Maenads leap behind,
And when I hear the fire-winged feet,
They only hear the wind.

Have I not chased the fluting Pan
Through Cranham's sober trees?
Have I not sat on Painswick Hill
With a nymph upon my knees,
And she as rosy as the dawn,
And naked as the breeze?

iv

But when I lie in Grecian fields,
Smothered in asphodel,
Or climb the blue and barren hills,
Or sing in woods that smell
With such hot spices of the South
As mariners might sell—

Then my heart turns where no sun burns,
To lands of glittering rain,
To fields beneath low-clouded skies
New-widowed of their grain,
And Autumn leaves like blood and gold
That strew a Gloucester lane.

v

Oh well I know sweet Hellas now,
And well I knew it then,
When I with starry lads walked out—
But ah, for home again!
Was I not bred in Gloucestershire,
One of the Englishmen!

Areiya

This place was formed divine for love and us to dwell ;
  This house of brown stone built for us to sleep therein ;
Those blossoms haunt the rocks that we should see and
    smell ;
  Those old rocks break the hill that we the heights should
    win.

Those heights survey the sea that there our thoughts
    should sail
  Up the steep wall of wave to touch the Syrian sky :
For us that sky at eve fades out of purple pale,
  Pale as the mountain mists beneath our house that lie.

In front of our small house are brown stone arches three ;
  Behind it, the low porch where all the jasmine grows ;
Beyond it, red and green, the gay pomegranate tree ;
  Around it, like love's arms, the summer and the rose.

Within it sat and wrote in minutes soft and few
This worst and best of songs, one who loves it, and you.

The Golden Journey to Samarkand

PROLOGUE

We who with songs beguile your pilgrimage
  And swear that Beauty lives though lilies die,
We Poets of the proud old lineage
  Who sing to find your hearts, we know not why,—

What shall we tell you? Tales, marvellous tales
  Of ships and stars and isles where good men rest,
Where nevermore the rose of sunset pales,
  And winds and shadows fall toward the West:

And there the world's first huge white-bearded kings
  In dim glades sleeping, murmur in their sleep,
And closer round their breasts the ivy clings,
  Cutting its pathway slow and red and deep.

II

And how beguile you? Death has no repose
  Warmer and deeper than that Orient sand
Which hides the beauty and bright faith of those
  Who made the Golden Journey to Samarkand.

And now they wait and whiten peaceably,
  Those conquerors, those poets, those so fair:
They know time comes, not only you and I,
  But the whole world shall whiten, here or there;

When those long caravans that cross the plain
  With dauntless feet and sound of silver bells
Put forth no more for glory or for gain,
  Take no more solace from the palm-girt wells,

When the great markets by the sea shut fast
  All that calm Sunday that goes on and on:
When even lovers find their peace at last,
  And Earth is but a star, that once had shone.

EPILOGUE

At the Gate of the Sun, Bagdad, in olden time

THE MERCHANTS (*together*)

Away, for we are ready to a man!
  Our camels sniff the evening and are glad.
Lead on, O Master of the Caravan:
  Lead on the Merchant-Princes of Bagdad

THE CHIEF DRAPER

Have we not Indian carpets dark as wine,
Turbans and sashes, gowns and bows and veils,
And broideries of intricate design,
And printed hangings in enormous bales?

THE CHIEF GROCER

We have rose-candy, we have spikenard,
Mastic and terebinth and oil and spice,
And such sweet jams meticulously jarred
As God's own Prophet eats in Paradise.

THE PRINCIPAL JEWS

And we have manuscripts in peacock styles
By Ali of Damascus; we have swords
Engraved with storks and apes and crocodiles,
And heavy beaten necklaces, for Lords.

THE MASTER OF THE CARAVAN

But you are nothing but a lot of Jews.

THE PRINCIPAL JEWS

Sir, even dogs have daylight, and we pay.

THE MASTER OF THE CARAVAN

But who are ye in rags and rotten shoes,
You dirty-bearded, blocking up the way?

THE PILGRIMS

We are the Pilgrims, master; we shall go
Always a little further: it may be
Beyond that last blue mountain barred with snow,
Across that angry or that glimmering sea,
White on a throne or guarded in a cave
There lives a prophet who can understand
Why men were born: but surely we are brave,
Who make the Golden Journey to Samarkand.

THE CHIEF MERCHANT

We gnaw the nail of hurry. Master, away!

ONE OF THE WOMEN

O turn your eyes to where your children stand.
Is not Bagdad the beautiful? O stay!

THE MERCHANTS (*in chorus*)

We take the Golden Road to Samarkand.

An Old Man

Have you not girls and garlands in your homes,
Eunuchs and Syrian boys at your command?
Seek not excess: God hateth him who roams!

The Merchants (*in chorus*)

We make the Golden Journey to Samarkand.

A Pilgrim with a Beautiful Voice

Sweet to ride forth at evening from the wells
When shadows pass gigantic on the sand,
And softly through the silence beat the bells
Along the Golden Road to Samarkand.

A Merchant

We travel not for trafficking alone:
By hotter winds our fiery hearts are fanned:
For lust of knowing what should not be known
We make the Golden Journey to Samarkand.

The Master of the Caravan

Open the gate, O watchman of the night!

THE WATCHMAN

Ho, travellers, I open. For what land
Leave you the dim-moon city of delight?

THE MERCHANTS (*with a shout*)

We make the Golden Journey to Samarkand.

[*The Caravan passes through the gate*]

THE WATCHMAN (*consoling the women*)

What would ye, ladies? It was ever thus.
Men are unwise and curiously planned.

A WOMAN

They have their dreams, and do not think of us.

VOICES OF THE CARAVAN (*in the distance, singing*)

We make the Golden Journey to Samarkand.

Gates of Damascus

Four great gates has the city of Damascus,
And four Grand Wardens, on their spears reclining,
All day long stand like tall stone men
And sleep on the towers when the moon is shining.

This is the song of the East Gate Warden
When he locks the great gate and smokes in his garden.

Postern of Fate, the Desert Gate, Disaster's Cavern, Fort of Fear,
The Portal of Bagdad am I, the Doorway of Diarbekir.

The Persian Dawn with new desires may net the flushing mountain spires :
But my gaunt buttress still rejects the suppliance of those mellow fires.

Pass not beneath, O Caravan, or pass not singing. Have you heard
That silence where the birds are dead yet something pipeth like a bird ?

Pass not beneath! Men say there blows in stony deserts still a rose
But with no scarlet to her leaf—and from whose heart no perfume flows.

Wilt thou bloom red where she buds pale, thy sister rose? Wilt thou not fail
When noonday flashes like a flail? Leave nightingale the caravan!

Pass then, pass all! "Bagdad!" ye cry, and down the billows of blue sky
Ye beat the bell that beats to hell, and who shall thrust ye back? Not I.

The Sun who flashes through the head and paints the shadows green and red,—
The Sun shall eat thy fleshless dead, O Caravan, O Caravan!

And one who licks his lips for thirst with fevered eyes shall face in fear
The palms that wave, the streams that burst, his last mirage, O Caravan!

And one—the bird-voiced Singing-man—shall fall behind thee, Caravan!
And God shall meet him in the night, and he shall sing as best he can.

And one the Bedouin shall slay, and one, sand-stricken on the way,
Go dark and blind; and one shall say—"How lonely is the Caravan!"

Pass out beneath, O Caravan, Doom's Caravan, Death's Caravan!
I had not told ye, fools, so much, save that I heard your Singing-man.

This was sung by the West Gate's keeper
When heaven's hollow dome grew deeper.

I am the gate toward the sea: O sailor men, pass out from me!
I hear you high on Lebanon, singing the marvels of the sea.

The dragon-green, the luminous, the dark, the serpent-haunted sea,
The snow-besprinkled wine of earth, the white-and-blue-flower foaming sea.

Beyond the sea are towns with towers, carved with lions and lily flowers,
And not a soul in all those lonely streets to while away the hours.

Beyond the towns, an isle where, bound, a naked giant
bites the ground :
The shadow of a monstrous wing looms on his back : and
still no sound.

Beyond the isle a rock that screams like madmen shouting
in their dreams,
From whose dark issues night and day blood crashes in a
thousand streams.

Beyond the rock is Restful Bay, where no wind breathes
or ripple stirs,
And there on Roman ships, they say, stand rows of metal
mariners.

Beyond the bay in utmost West old Solomon the Jewish
King
Sits with his beard upon his breast, and grips and guards
his magic ring :

And when that ring is stolen, he will rise in outraged
majesty,
And take the World upon his back, and fling the World
beyond the sea.

This is the song of the North Gate's master,
Who singeth fast, but drinketh faster.

I am the gay Aleppo Gate : a dawn, a dawn and thou art there :
Eat not thy heart with fear and care, O brother of the beast we hate !

Thou hast not many miles to tread, nor other foes than fleas to dread ;
Homs shall behold thy morning meal and Hama see thee safe in bed.

Take to Aleppo filigrane, and take them paste of apricots,
And coffee tables botched with pearl, and little beaten brassware pots :

And thou shalt sell thy wares for thrice the Damascene retailers' price,
And buy a fat Armenian slave who smelleth odorous and nice.

Some men of noble stock were made : some glory in the murder-blade :
Some praise a Science or an Art, but I like honourable Trade !

Sell them the rotten, buy the ripe ! Their heads are weak ; their pockets burn.
Aleppo men are mighty fools. Salaam Aleikum ! Safe return !

This is the song of the South Gate Holder,
A silver man, but his song is older.

I am the Gate that fears no fall : the Mihrab of Damascus wall,
The bridge of booming Sinai : the Arch of Allah all in all.

O spiritual pilgrim, rise : the night has grown her single horn :
The voices of the souls unborn are half adream with Paradise.

To Meccah thou hast turned in prayer with aching heart and eyes that burn :
Ah, Hajji, whither wilt thou turn when thou art there, when thou art there ?

God be thy guide from camp to camp : God be thy shade from well to well ;
God grant beneath the desert stars thou hear the Prophet's camel bell.

And God shall make thy body pure, and give thee knowledge to endure
This ghost-life's piercing phantom-pain, and bring thee out to Life again.

And God shall make thy soul a Glass where eighteen
thousand Æons pass,
And thou shalt see the gleaming Worlds as men see dew
upon the grass.

And, son of Islam, it may be that thou shalt learn at
journey's end
Who walks thy garden eve on eve, and bows his head, and
calls thee Friend.

Hyali

Στὸ Γυαλί, στὸ γαλάζιο βράχο

Island in blue of summer floating on,
  Little brave sister of the Sporades,
Hail and farewell! I pass, and thou art gone,
  So fast in fire the great boat beats the seas.

But slowly fade, soft Island! Ah to know
  Thy town and who the gossips of thy town,
What flowers flash in thy meadows, what winds blow
  Across thy mountain when the sun goes down.

There is thy market, where the fisher throws
  His gleaming fish that gasp in the death-bright dawn:
And there thy Prince's house, painted old rose,
  Beyond the olives, crowns its slope of lawn.

And is thy Prince so rich that he displays
  At festal board the flesh of sheep and kine?
Or dare he—summer days are long hot days—
  Load up with Asian snow his Coan wine?

Behind a rock, thy harbour, whence a noise
Of tarry sponge-boats hammered lustily :
And from that little rock thy naked boys
Like burning arrows shower upon the sea.

And there by the old Greek chapel—there beneath
A thousand poppies that each sea-wind stirs
And cyclamen, as honied and white as death,
Dwell deep in earth the elder islanders.

. . . . . .

Thy name I know not, Island, but *his* name
I know, and why so proud thy mountain stands,
And what thy happy secret, and Who came
Drawing his painted galley up thy sands.

For my Gods—Trident Gods who deep and pale
Swim in the Latmian Sound, have murmured thus :
" To such an island came with a pompous sail
On his first voyage young Herodotus."

Since then—tell me no tale how Romans built,
Saracens plundered—or that bearded lords
Rowed by to fight for Venice, and here spilt
Their blood across the bay that keeps their swords

That old Greek day was all thy history :
For that did Ocean poise thee as a flower.
Farewell : this boat attends not such as thee :
Farewell : I was thy lover for an hour !

Farewell ! But I who call upon thy caves
Am far like thee,—like thee, unknown and poor,
And yet my words are music as thy waves,
And like thy rocks shall down through time endure.

Santorin

(*A Legend of the Aegean*)

" Who are you, Sea Lady,
And where in the seas are we?
I have too long been steering
By the flashes in your eyes.
Why drops the moonlight through my heart,
And why so quietly
Go the great engines of my boat
As if their souls were free?"
" Oh ask me not, bold sailor;
Is not your ship a magic ship
That sails without a sail:
Are not these isles the Isles of Greece
And dust upon the sea?
But answer me three questions
And give me answers three.
What is your ship?" " A British."
" And where may Britain be?"
" Oh it lies north, dear lady;
It is a small country."

" Yet you will know my lover,
Though you live far away :
And you will whisper where he has gone,
That lily boy to look upon
And whiter than the spray."
" How should I know your lover,
Lady of the sea ? "
" Alexander, Alexander,
The King of the World was he."
" Weep not for him, dear lady,
But come aboard my ship.
So many years ago he died,
He's dead as dead can be."
" O base and brutal sailor
To lie this lie to me.
His mother was the foam-foot
Star-sparkling Aphrodite ;
His father was Adonis
Who lives away in Lebanon,
In stony Lebanon, where blooms
His red anemone.
But where is Alexander,
The soldier Alexander,
My golden love of olden days
The King of the World and me ? "

.

She sank into the moonlight
And the sea was only sea.

A Ship, an Isle, a Sickle Moon

A ship, an isle, a sickle moon—
With few but with how splendid stars
The mirrors of the sea are strewn
Between their silver bars!

. . .

An isle beside an isle she lay,
The pale ship anchored in the bay,
While in the young moon's port of gold
A star-ship—as the mirrors told—
Put forth its great and lonely light
To the unreflecting Ocean, Night.
And still, a ship upon her seas,
The isle and the island cypresses
Went sailing on without the gale:
And still there moved the moon so pale,
A crescent ship without a sail!

In Hospital

Would I might lie like this, without the pain,
For seven years—as one with snowy hair,
Who in the high tower dreams his dying reign—

Lie here and watch the walls—how grey and bare,
The metal bed-post, the uncoloured screen,
The mat, the jug, the cupboard, and the chair ;

And served by an old woman, calm and clean,
Her misted face familiar, yet unknown,
Who comes in silence, and departs unseen,

And with no other visit, lie alone,
Nor stir, except I had my food to find
In that dull bowl Diogenes might own.

And down my window I would draw the blind,
And never look without, but, waiting, hear
A noise of rain, a whistling of the wind.

And only know that flame-foot Spring is near
By trilling birds, or by the patch of sun
Crouching behind my curtain. So, in fear,

Noon-dreams should enter, softly, one by one,
And throng about the floor, and float and play
And flicker on the screen, while minutes run—

The last majestic minutes of the day—
And with the mystic shadows, Shadow grow.
Then the grey square of wall should fade away,

And glow again, and open, and disclose
The shimmering lake in which the planets swim,
And all that lake a dewdrop on a rose.

Brumana

Oh shall I never never be home again?
Meadows of England shining in the rain
Spread wide your daisied lawns: your ramparts green
With briar fortify, with blossom screen
Till my far morning—and O streams that slow
And pure and deep through plains and playlands go,
For me your love and all your kingcups store,
And—dark militia of the southern shore,
Old fragrant friends—preserve me the last lines
Of that long saga which you sung me, pines,
When, lonely boy, beneath the chosen tree
I listened, with my eyes upon the sea.

O traitor pines, you sang what life has found
The falsest of fair tales.
Earth blew a far-horn prelude all around,
That native music of her forest home,
While from the sea's blue fields and syren dales
Shadows and light noon-spectres of the foam
Riding the summer gales
On aery viols plucked an idle sound.

Hearing you sing, O trees,
Hearing you murmur, " There are older seas,
That beat on vaster sands,
Where the wise snailfish move their pearly towers
To carven rocks and sculptured promont'ries,"
Hearing you whisper, " Lands
Where blaze the unimaginable flowers."

Beneath me in the valley waves the palm,
Beneath, beyond the valley, breaks the sea ;
Beneath me sleep in mist and light and calm
Cities of Lebanon, dream-shadow-dim,
Where Kings of Tyre and Kings of Tyre did rule
In ancient days in endless dynasty,
And all around the snowy mountains swim
Like mighty swans afloat in heaven's pool.

But I will walk upon the wooded hill
Where stands a grove, O pines, of sister pines,
And when the downy twilight droops her wing
And no sea glimmers and no mountain shines
My heart shall listen still.
For pines are gossip pines the wide world through
And full of runic tales to sigh or sing.
'Tis ever sweet through pines to see the sky
Mantling a deeper gold or darker blue.
'Tis ever sweet to lie
On the dry carpet of the needles brown,

And though the fanciful green lizard stir
And windy odours light as thistledown
Breathe from the lavdanon and lavender,
Half to forget the wandering and pain,
Half to remember days that have gone by,
And dream and dream that I am home again

The Old Ships

I have seen old ships sail like swans asleep
Beyond the village which men still call Tyre,
With leaden age o'ercargoed, dipping deep
For Famagusta and the hidden sun
That rings black Cyprus with a lake of fire ;
And all those ships were certainly so old
Who knows how oft with squat and noisy gun,
Questing brown slaves or Syrian oranges,
The pirate Genoese
Hell-raked them till they rolled
Blood, water, fruit and corpses up the hold.
But now through friendly seas they softly run,
Painted the mid-sea blue or shore-sea green,
Still patterned with the vine and grapes in gold.

But I have seen,
Pointing her shapely shadows from the dawn
And image tumbled on a rose-swept bay,
A drowsy ship of some yet older day ;
And, wonder's breath indrawn,

Thought I—who knows—who knows—but in that same
(Fished up beyond Aeæa, patched up new
—Stern painted brighter blue—)
That talkative, bald-headed seaman came
(Twelve patient comrades sweating at the oar)
From Troy's doom-crimson shore,
And with great lies about his wooden horse
Set the crew laughing, and forgot his course.

It was so old a ship—who knows, who knows?
—And yet so beautiful, I watched in vain
To see the mast burst open with a rose,
And the whole deck put on its leaves again

The Blue Noon

When the whole sky is vestured silken blue
With not one fleece to view,
Drown your deep eyes afar, and see you must
How the light azure dust
And speckled atoms of the polished skies
Are large blue butterflies.
The proof? Lie in a field on heavy noons,
When Nature drones and croons
And on man's distant cry or dog's far bark
Hush sets the instant mark,
Look up: when nothing earthly stirs or sings
You hear them wave their wings,
And watch the breeze their vanity awakes
Light on the heavenly lakes.
But when the shades before the sun's huge fall
In sham retreat grow tall,
Their ambushed allies, the impatient stars,
Make ready for bright wars,
And shoot ten million arrows to chastise
The tardy butterflies
Who dive in hosts toward the diving sphere
That holds the light's frontier,
And the poor vanquished, turning as they glide
Show their gold underside.

Stillness

When the words rustle no more,
  And the last work's done,
When the bolt lies deep in the door,
  And Fire, our Sun,
Falls on the dark-laned meadows of the floor ;

When from the clock's last chime to the next chime
  Silence beats his drum,
And Space with gaunt grey eyes and her brother Time
  Wheeling and whispering come,
She with the mould of form and he with the loom of
    rhyme :

Then twittering out in the night my thought-birds flee
  I am emptied of all my dreams :
I only hear Earth turning, only see
  Ether's long bankless streams,
And only know I should drown if you laid not your
    hand on me.

Philomel

(*From the French of Paul Fort*)

O sing, in heart of silence hiding near,
Thou whom the roses bend their heads to hear!
In silence down the moonlight slides her wing:
Will no rose breathe while Philomel doth sing?
No breath—and deeper yet the perfume grows:
The voice of Philomel can slay a rose:
The song of Philomel on nights serene
Implores the gods who roam in shades unseen,
But never calls the roses, whose perfume
Deepens and deepens, as they wait their doom.
Is it not silence whose great bosom heaves?
Listen, a rose-tree drops her quiet leaves.

Now silence flashes lightning like a storm:
Now silence is a cloud, and cradled warm
By risings and by fallings of the tune
That Philomel doth sing, as shines the moon,
—A bird's or some immortal voice from Hell?
There is no breath to die with, Philomel!

And yet the world has changed without a breath.
The moon lies heavy on the roses' death,
And every rosebush droops its leafy crown.
A gust of roses has gone sweeping down.

The panicked garden drives her leaves about:
The moon is masked: it flares and flickers out.
O shivering petals on your lawn of fear,
Turn down to Earth and hear what you shall hear.
A beat, a beat, a beat beneath the ground,
And hurrying beats, and one great beat profound.
A heart is coming close: I have heard pass
The noise of a great Heart upon the grass.
The petals reel. Earth opens: from beneath
The ashen roses on their lawn of death,
Raising her peaceful brow, the grand and pale
Demeter listens to the nightingale.

Fountains

Soft is the collied night, and cool
The wind about the garden pool.
Here will I dip my burning hand
And move an inch of drowsy sand,
And pray the dark reflected skies
To fasten with their seal mine eyes.
A million million leagues away
Among the stars the goldfish play,
And high above the shadowed stars
Wave and float the nenuphars.

Ode to the Glory of Greece

(*A Fragment*)

Hellas victorious !
Two came to me at night
Glorious
With that Elysian light
Which round the phantoms of great Poets dead
Hovers, as once in their blue earthly eyes
Played Thoughts with wings outspread,—
The splendour of their souls.
Cried one to me, " O mortal brother, since thou lovest too
With all thy burning breath
The stony hills and salt Corinthian blue
From whose divine dear shore
Apollo led me to the caves of death——"

But charmèd, he forbore.
His voice had sung to measure grave and low
When suddenly his young friend-phantom spoke,
And Shelley's voice rang like a wave of æther
Blazing and breaking on rosy cliffs of air,
And his face was flaming snow, overlushed

By a river of the sun—his long bright hair.
" Inheritor," he sang, " speed thou away
Rushing with Aeolus and Boreas, rushing on the ancient paths
Scattering the rosy plumage of the new arisen day

" Go thou to Athens, go to Salonica,
Go thou to Yannina beside the lake,
And cry, ' The vision of the Prophet dead ! '
Cry, ' The Olympians wake ! '
And cry, ' O Towers of Hellas built anew by rhyme,
Star-woven to my Amphionic lyre,
Stand you in steel for ever,
And from your lofty lanterns sweeping the dim hills and the nocturnal sea
Pour out the fire of Hellas, the everlasting fire ! ' "

And then to me once more the Elder Shadow :
" Still, brother, Shelley's fancy brims desire :
His soul is so acquainted with great dreams
That even the immane Elysian meadow
Whose flowers are stars and every star a world that glides and gleams,
Confines him not—but still he longs to roam
Beyond the quiet spiritual home.
—His soul is so acquainted with great dreams
That man's endeavour
He seeth not near—that broken river
Struggling—to what salt sea ?

"Since man's endeavour flows as a river, how shall it
turn to the hills again?
—Burst again all rosy with morning from snow-starred
mountains of first renown;
Who to-day shall hear the Achaeans shout from the
trench of the Troyans slain,
Who rebuild in music or memory Sparta's tower or
Athena's town?

"Since the Roman intercepted and Rome's dimidiate,
stoled Byzance,
Shall they hear above their cannon grave, the Periclean
tune?
Christ oversang it, chivalry dimmed it, winding on
Parnès the horns of France,
Islam drowned the echo of echo deep in the night of
her languid moon."

. . . . . .

Passionate thus he spake, the wise ghost unforgetful
Of stone and tree, river and shore and plain,
And the good coloured things of Earth the dead see
not again,
And how man's hope grows weak and his force fretful
With such great hills to gain.
I for an answer pondered deep,
And then I seemed to fall from sleep to sleep,
Watching as through a veil I could not tear
The threads of rose and gold of Shelley's hair

The gold glowed deeper and the rose burnt red,
And I saw running and rustling at my feet
The rivers of a golden sun that bled
Scarlet, scarlet, scarlet as though wounded
By some celestial archer of the Stars
In the last fight when God's last trump was sounded ;
Then the great lake of commingling blood and fire
Burst in a fountain to my window streaming,
To my Cephisian window high and cool,
Over far Salamis and Athens gleaming,
Drowning the sea and city in one deep pool
And only now old Parnès of the West
And grey Hymettus of the dawn
Rose above the phantom seas
Like Islands of the Blest.

Then a wind came and swept and whirled away,
And the mist left Hymettus broken small
Like a swarm of golden bees.
Gone is the Poet of the magic locks,
And Byron gone ; master of war's [. . . .]
Outflashes white the holy Parthenon
And broad calm streets of Athens of to-day,
And in the barracks the far bugles play,
O listen what they say !

. . . . . .

Hark, hark the shepherd piping far and near,
The hills are dancing to the Dorian mood.

To-day Arcady is and the white Fear
Naked in sunshine glory still haunts here:
The old dark wood
Invites to prayer—or fountain in the vale.
If not the Cytherean, one more dear
Daphnis shall worship—one more pale,
She too a heroine of a Grecian tale.

. . . . . .

But if no Pheidias with marble towers
Grace our new Athens, simple, calm and wide,
Carving a group of men to look like flowers
For our new glory's pride.
If songs of gentle Solomos be less
Than that Aeschylean trump of bronze
And if beside Eurotas the lone swans
About the desolation press:

Yet still victorious Hellas, thou hast heard
Those ancient voices thundering to arms,
Thou nation of an older younger day
Thou hast gone forth as with the poet's song.
Surely the spirit of the old oak grove
Rejoiced to hear the cannon round Yannina,
Apollo launched his shaft of terror down
On Salonica. . . .

. . . . . .

1913

November Eves

November Evenings! Damp and still
They used to cloak Leckhampton hill,
And lie down close on the grey plain,
And dim the dripping window-pane,
And send queer winds like Harlequins
That seized our elms for violins
And struck a note so sharp and low
Even a child could feel the woe.

Now fire chased shadow round the room;
Tables and chairs grew vast in gloom:
We crept about like mice, while Nurse
Sat mending, solemn as a hearse,
And even our unlearned eyes
Half closed with choking memories.

Is it the mist or the dead leaves,
Or the dead men—November eves?

The Burial in England

These then we honour : these in fragrant earth
Of their own country in great peace forget
Death's lion-roar and gust of nostril-flame
Breathing souls across to the Evening Shore.
Soon over these the flowers of our hill-sides
Shall wake and wave and nod beneath the bee
And whisper love to Zephyr year on year,
Till the red war gleam like a dim red rose
Lost in the garden of the Sons of Time.
But ah what thousands no such friendly doom
Awaits,—whom silent comrades in full night
Gazing right and left shall bury swiftly
By the cold flicker of an alien moon.

Ye veilèd women, ye with folded hands,
Mourning those you half hoped for Death too dear,
I claim no heed of you. Broader than earth
Love stands eclipsing nations with his wings,
While Pain, his shadow, delves as black and deep
As he e'er flamed or flew. Citizens draw
Back from their dead awhile. Salute the flag !

If this flag though royally always borne,
Deceived not dastard, ever served base gold ;
If the dark children of the old Forest

Once feared it, or ill Sultans mocked it furled,
Yet now as on a thousand death-reaped days
It takes once more the unquestionable road.
O bright with blood of heroes, not a star
Of all the north shines purer on the sea!
  Our foes—the hardest men a state can forge,
An army wrenched and hammered like a blade
Toledo-wrought neither to break nor bend,
Dipped in that ice the pedantry of power,
And toughened with wry gospels of dismay;
Such are these who brake down the door of France,
Wolves worrying at the old World's honour,
Hunting Peace not to prison but her tomb.
But ever as some brown song-bird whose torn nest
Gapes robbery, darts on the hawk like fire,
So Peace hath answered, angry and in arms.
And from each grey hamlet and bright town of France
From where the apple or the olive grows
Or thin tall strings of poplars on the plains,
From the rough castle of the central hills,
From the three coasts—of mist and storm and sun,
And meadows of the four deep-rolling streams,
From every house whose windows hear God's bell
Crowding the twilight with the wings of prayer
And flash their answer in a golden haze,
Stream the young soldiers who are never tired.
For all the foul mists vanished when that land
Called clear; as in the sunny Alpine morn
The jodeler awakes the frosty slopes
To thunderous replies,—soon fading far

Among the vales like songs of dead children.
But the French guns' answer, ne'er to echoes weak
Diminished, bursts from the deep trenches yet ;
And its least light vibration blew to dust
The weary factions,—priest's or guild's or king's,
And side by side troop up the old partisans,
The same laughing, invincible, tough men
Who gave Napoleon Europe like a loaf,
For slice and portion,—not so long ago !
Either to Alsace or loved lost Lorraine
They pass, or inexpugnable Verdun
Ceintured with steel, or stung with faith's old cry
Assume God's vengeance for His temple stones.
But you maybe best wish them for the north
Beside you 'neath low skies in loamèd fields,
Or where the great line hard on the duned shore
Ends and night leaps to England's sea-borne flame.
Never one drop of Lethe's stagnant cup
Dare dim the fountains of the Marne and Aisne
Since still the flowers and meadow-grass unmown
Lie broken with the imprint of those who fell,
Briton and Gaul—but fell immortal friends
And fell victorious and like tall trees fell.

But young men, you who loiter in the town,
Need you be roused with overshouted words,
Country, Empire, Honour, Liége, Louvain ?
Pay your own Youth the duty of her dreams.
For what sleep shall keep her from the thrill
Of War's star-smiting music, with its swell
Of shore and forest and horns high in the wind,

(Yet pierced with that too sharp piping which if man
Hear and not fear he shall face God unscathed)?
What, are you poets whose vain souls contrive
Sorties and sieges spun of the trickling moon
And such a rousing ghost-catastrophe
You need no concrete marvels to be saved?
Or live you here too lustily for change?
Sail you such pirate seas on such high quests,
Hunt you thick gold or striped and spotted beasts,
Or tread the lone ways of the swan-like mountains?
Excused. But if, as I think, breeched in blue,
Stalled at a counter, cramped upon a desk,
You drive a woman's pencraft—or a slave's,
What chain shall hold you when the trumpets play
Calling from the blue hill behind your town,
Calling over the seas, calling for you!
"But," do you murmur? "we'd not be as those.
Death is a dour recruiting-sergeant: see,
These women weep, we celebrate the dead."
Boys, drink the cup of warning dry. Face square
That old grim hazard, "Glory-or-the-Grave."
Not we shall trick your pleasant years away,
Yet is not Death the great adventure still,
And is it all loss to set ship clean anew
When heart is young and life an eagle poised?
Choose, you're no cowards. After all, think some,
Since we are men and shrine immortal souls
Surely for us as for these nobly dead
The Kings of England lifting up their swords
Shall gather at the gate of Paradise.

The True Paradise

Lord, is the Poet to destruction vowed,
Like the dawn-feather of an April cloud,
Which signs in russet character or grey
The name of Beauty on the book of Day?
We poets crave no heav'n but what is ours—
These trees beside these rivers; these same flowers
Shaped and enfragranced to the English field
Where Thy best florist-craft is full revealed.
Trees by the river, birds upon the bough
My soul shall ask for, whose flesh enjoys them now
Through both the pale-blue windows of quick Mind;
Grant me earth's treats in Paradise to find.
Nor listen to that island-bound St. John
Who'd have no Sea in Heaven, no Sea to sail upon!
Remake this World less Man's and Nature's Pain;
Save such dear torment as the chill of Rain
When the sun flouts us like a maid her man
Drowned in long meshes of a silver Fan.
Nor, Lord, the good fatigue of labouring breath
Destroy, but only Sickness, Age and Death.
Let old Plays teach Despair's sad grandeur still
And legends trumpet War's last Hero-thrill.

So I and all my friends, still young, still wise,
Will shout along thy streets—" O Paradise ! "
But if prepared for me new Mansions are,
Chill and unknown, in some bright windy Star,
'Mid strange-shaped Souls from all the Planets seven,
Lord, I fear deep, and would not go to Heaven.
Rather in feather-mist I'd fade away
Like the Dawn-writing of an April day

The Old Warship Ablaze

Founder, old battleship ; thy fight is done !
Yonder ablaze like thee now sinks the sun,
Shooting the last grand broadside of his beams
Over thy blackened plates and writhing seams.
Against hard odds thy crew played all their part,
Driving thee deathwards that the foe should smart
Till the guns brake and fire leapt up insane,
And they abandoned thee, to fight again,
Who on thy deck, where flicker the gaunt flames,
Have left so many dead—won such proud names

Dark flow the waiting waves : one can still see
Thy giant murderer edge sullenly
Eastward among the swelling towers of night.
Canst thou, dying, forget in Hell's despite
Thy freight of fire and blood, the roar and rage
Of waves and guns ? Thou liest age on age
Tranced like the Princess in her sleepy Thorn,
In that curv'd bay where once the film of morn
Brake azure to thy bugles, skilled to bring
The Afric breeze, who, prompt on honied wing,

Silvered the waves and then the olive trees,
And shook like sceptres those stiff companies
The columned palms,—nor till the air was full
Of flash and whisper came the noon-tide lull.
Or that far country's ten-year-buried eves
Or moonlight scattered like a shower of leaves
Dost thou recall?—Or how on this same deck,
Whose flaming planks blood-boultered tilt to wreck,
The dance went round to music, and how shone
For English grey, black eyes of Lebanon?

But Eastward and still East the World is thrown
Like a mad hunter seeking dawns unknown
Who plunges deep in sparkless woods of gloom.
Lebanon long hath turned into night's womb
And through her stellèd casements pass new dreams:
Thee too from those last no-more-rival beams
Earth rolleth back. Alone, O ship, O flower,
O flame, thou sailest for a moth-weak hour!

They come at last, the bird-soft pattering feet!
Flame high, old ship; the Fair throng up to greet
Thy splendid doom. See the long spirits, curled
Beside their dead, stand upright free of the world!
And seize the bright shapes loosed from blood-warm
sleep,
They, the true ghosts, whose eyes are fixed and deep!

O ship, O fire, O fancy! A swift roar
Has rent the brow of night. Thou nevermore
Shalt glide to channel port or Syrian town;
Light ghosts have danced thee like a plummet down,
And, swift as Fate through skies with storm bestrewn.
Dips out ironical that ship New Moon.

THE END

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